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WORDS

OF

ENCOURAGEMENT.

BY

MATTHEW HENRY

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WORDS

ENCOURAGING TO RIGHT FAITH AND CONDUCT

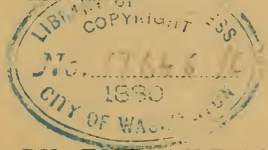
SELECTED FROM

THE WRITINGS OF MATTHEW HENRY

BY

JOHN S. SHERMAN.

SECOND EDITION.



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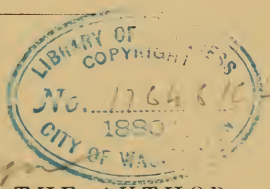

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PREFACE.

MATTHEW HENRY was an English divine who wrote in the eighteenth century, distinguished for his devotional spirit, practical piety, sound common sense, and intelligent views of the teachings of the Bible. In view of the life and character of so good and gifted a person, it is hoped these selections will be received with favor, displace reading that is frivolous, correct that which is erroneous, and promote morality and religion. Some of the sentences will find response in many minds.

WORDS OF ENCOURAGEMENT.

Let us acknowledge God in the constant succession of day and night, and consecrate both to his honor, by working for him every day, and resting in him every night; and meditating in his law day and night.

The Scriptures were written, not to gratify our curiosity, and make us astronomers, but to lead us to God, and make us saints.

Mercies restored are much more affecting than mercies continued.

Though we must not tempt God in the neglect of means, yet we must trust God in the want of means.

Let us always think well of God as the best good, and think sin to be the worst of evils. Let us "resist the devil, and he will flee from us."

The Hebrew doctors give it for a general rule, that everything that is for the name of the good God must be the goodliest and best.

It is better to fear and not sin, than sin and then fear.

When a bad custom is begun by bad men, sometimes men of better character are, through unwariness, drawn in to follow them.

They that would not eat forbidden fruit, must not come near the forbidden tree.

Sin is a brat that nobody is willing to own.

That which is to be aimed at, in all acts of religion, is God's acceptance.

He that feeds his birds will not starve his babes.

Let us never displease God, by doing any act which is wrong, to please the best friend in the world.

To prevent our being uneasy at the restraints of religion, it is good often to take a view of the liberties and comforts of it.

How careful should we be, as we live on God's bounty, to live to his glory.

None are ruined by the justice of God, but those who hate to be reformed by the grace of God.

If we graciously rest in God, God will graciously work for us, and work all for good.

If sinners will but consider *where* they are, they will not rest till they turn to God.

It is a certain sign of an unhumbled heart, to quarrel with those rebukes which we have, by our sins, brought upon ourselves.

God will graciously bless—that is, do well—to them who sincerely bless—that is, speak well of him.

He was content to forego the privileges of religion, that he might not be under its precepts.

The rainbow is the reflection of the beams of the sun, which intimates that all the glory, and significancy, of the seals of the covenant are derived from Christ, the Sun of Righteousness, who also is described with a rainbow about his throne.

Though Divine curses operate slowly, yet first or last they will take effect; many are marked for ruin that are not yet ripe for ruin.

In all our choices, this principle should overrule us, that this is best for us, that is best for our souls.

Those that venture in a good cause, with a good heart, are under the special protection of a good God.

It will greatly help both our faith and our reverence in prayer to eye God as the Most High God, and to call him so.

It is good to learn of others how to order our speech concerning God, and to imitate those who speak well in divine things.

An active believer can heartily bless God for a promise he does not yet see the performance of; and build an altar to the honor of God, who appears *to* him though he does not appear *for* him.

As piety is a friend to outward prosperity, so outward prosperity, if well managed, is an ornament to piety, and an opportunity of doing so much more good.

God Almighty never did, nor ever will, do any wrong to any of the creatures, either by withholding that which is right, or by exacting more than is right.

The gifts of common providences are not comparable to those of covenant love.

Those do not rightly value the advantage of their covenant relation to God, and interest in him, who do not think it to balance the want of any created comfort whatever.

It is a dangerous thing to make light of Divine institutions, and to live in the neglect of them.

Those who would have communion with God must earnestly desire it and pray for it.

It is hard to cleave to the First Cause, when second causes frown.

Those only can expect the blessings of the promises who make conscience of their duty.

Those who, through grace, are themselves delivered out of a sinful state, should do what they can for the deliverance of others.

He that is the Saviour, will be the Destroyer of those who reject the salvation.

Our communion with God is to be kept up in providences as well as in ordinances.

Those who have turbulent spirits, have commonly troublesome lives; they that are provoking and injurious to others, must expect to be repaid in their own coin.

It is a great mercy to be hindered from committing sin. Of this God must have the glory, whoever is the instrument.

Those whom God has convinced of sin and danger, ought to tell others what God has done for them, that they also may be awakened, and brought to a like holy fear.

It is our wisdom to get and keep an interest with those who have an interest in heaven, and to make those our friends who are the friends of God.

God's providences look best and brightest when they are compared with his word, and when we observe how God in them all acts as he has said, as he has spoken.

God's promises and our experiences are sufficient to encourage our dependence upon God, and our expectation from him, in all the affairs of this life.

It is presumptuous to say that all those who are left out of the eternal dispensation of God's covenant are therefore excluded from all his mercies: those may be saved who are not thus honored.

God will cause that to issue in our comfort in which we sincerely aim at his glory.

It is the comfort as well as the belief of a good man that God's providence extends itself to the smallest occurrences, and admirably serves its own purposes by them.

What we win by prayer we must wear with praise, for mercies in answer to prayer lay us under particular obligation.

Those that are our people while we live, whether the people of God or the children of this world, are the people to whom death will gather us.

The intrinsic worth of God's promises cannot be lessened in a believer's eye by any cross providences.

Truth is the daughter of time, and in time it will out.

While there is such an alloy of sin as there is in our duties, we must expect an alloy of trouble in our comforts.

Sometimes it is requisite that a reproof should be given warm, like a physical potion, not too hot lest it scald the patient, yet not cold lest it prove ineffectual.

Those who are ever so careful to keep a good conscience, yet cannot always be sure of a good name.

Providence has ways of making those honest in the event that are not so in their designs.

Bad men will do more to serve their sinful passions, than good men will to serve their just affections.

The safety of good men is very much owing to the hold God has of the consciences of bad men, and the access he has to them.

Those who will do nothing to make themselves amiable, love to be thought formidable.

Where we have a tent, God must have an altar; where we have a house, he must have a church in it.

A lively apprehension of danger, and a quickening fear arising from it, may very well consist in a humble confidence in God's power and promise.

God answers our prayers by teaching us to order our affairs with discretion.

Many preserve themselves by humbling themselves; the bullet flies over him that stoops.

The interest we have in any persons, and the hold we have of them, should be wisely improved by us to bring them to the love and practice of religion.

Things never go well when the authority of a parent runs low in the family.

Human life begins with sorrow, and the roses of its joy are surrounded with thorns.

The laying up of God's oracles in our hearts will be of excellent use to us in all our conduct.

We are bound in honor, as well as justice and gratitude, not in anything to injure those who have a good opinion of us, and place a trust in us, how secret soever it may be done.

When we are called to vindicate ourselves, we should carefully avoid as much as may be speaking ill of others.

See how near sorrow and joy are to each other in this world, when tears serve for the expression of both.

It is our wisdom to reconcile ourselves to the sorest afflictions and make the best of them, for there is nothing got by striving with our Maker.

Tears of tenderness and affection are no disparagement at all, even to good and wise men.

Indecent words spoken in haste to our superiors should be recalled and amended.

Wealth sometimes brings as much care along with it as want, and more too.

It is better to be the credit of a mean post than the shame of a high one.

Our comforts then are doubly sweet to us when we see them coming from God.

Those that throw away their virtue must not expect to save their reputation.

Young people would better consult their own interest if they would less indulge their own wills.

The lot of God's providence exactly agrees with the plans of God's counsel like a true copy of the original.

Those who would be fearless must keep themselves guiltless.

Men know not what they do or what enemies they are to their own interest when they resist and despise faithful reproofs and reprovers.

It is rare that those that are most amiable to their friends are most formidable to their enemies.

God's covenant relation to us as our own God is the best support in the worst of times.

Whom God by his grace delivers out of a spiritual Egypt he will bring to a heavenly Canaan.

It is a good sign that God is coming with deliverance when he inclines and enables us to cry to him for it.

In times of extreme difficulty it is good to venture upon the promises of God.

Those who have had a liberal education, yet should not be strangers to servile work, because they know not what necessity may be put on them for working for themselves, or what opportunity Providence may give them of being serviceable to others.

If God gives us an opportunity and a heart to serve him, it is a happy and encouraging earnest of further favors designed us.

Even self-diffidence, when it grows into an extreme, when it either hinders us from duty or discourages our dependence upon the grace of God, is very displeasing to him.

Solitude has its advantages, but they seldom balance the loss of Christian communion.

When we return to God in the way of duty, he will return to us in a way of mercy.

The sufficiency of grace can supply the defects of nature at any time.

By indulging ourselves in discontent and fretfulnes we deprive ourselves of the comfort we might have both from God's word and from his providence.

Communion with God and serviceableness to his church are things that above any other put true honor upon men.

Peace with God makes men thunder-proof, for it is the voice of their Father.

Nature is contented with little, grace with less, but lust with nothing.

True penitents lament sin as committed against God, *even their own God,* to whom they stand obliged.

We must come up to the demands of God's will, for we cannot expect he should to the provisions of our lusts.

To be angry at nothing but sin, is the way not to sin in anger.

We may be in the way of our duty, following God and hastening toward heaven, and yet may be in great straits, "troubled on every side."

When our heads are fullest of cares, and our hands of business, yet we must not forget our religion nor suffer ourselves to be indisposed for acts of devotion.

Our constant endeavor should be, by praising God's name and serving his interest, to exalt God, and it is an advancement to us to be so employed.

The God of Nature has not tied himself to its laws, but when he pleases dispenses with them, and then fire does not burn nor the water flow.

It is a great provocation to God for us to question his presence, providence, or promises.

Whatever we have the joy of, God must have the praise of it.

We must retain the remembrance of God's works that we may remain under the influence of God's laws.

The pleasures of sense are puddle water—spiritual delights are rock water, so pure, so clear, so refreshing, rivers of pleasure!

It tends much to the encouragement of faith to reflect upon the great things God has done for us, and review the monuments of his favor.

Mutual friendship is sanctified by joint worship.

Wisdom is profitable to direct, that we may neither content ourselves with less than our duty, nor overtask ourselves with that which is beyond our strength.

The fear of God is that principle which will best fortify a man from all temptations to injustice.

We ought to be tender of the lives even of bad men; the magistrate must right us, and we must not avenge ourselves.

It is at our peril if we break the bounds that God has set us, and venture upon that he has not allowed us.

Those who would be kept free from sin must keep themselves from the occasion of it.

If we unjustly get and keep that which is another's, it will not only waste itself, but it will consume that which is our own.

Public persons are then public blessings when they lay out themselves in their places to promote the public worship of God.

General usage will not excuse us in a bad practice.

Good princes find their government a constant care, and their people find it a constant blessing.

Our daily devotions must be looked upon as the most needful of our daily works, and the most pleasant of our daily comforts.

Our two great concerns with God are to be acquitted from guilt and accepted as righteous in his sight.

God will not fail to give those the meeting who diligently and conscientiously attend upon him in the ordinances of his appointment.

Skill in common arts and employments is the gift of God, and from him are both the faculty and the improvement of the faculty.

The malignity of sin appears in the price of pardon.

In God we see nothing but what is pure and pleasant; in the world, nothing but pollution and provocation.

God's good work in us is the surest discovery of his good will toward us.

Calls to repentance are plain indications of mercy designed.

When God designs mercies he stirs up to prayer.

Fixed views of God are reserved for the future state; the best we have in this world are transient.

How easily can God weaken the strongest, befool the wisest, and baffle the most watchful.

Munificence recommends a man more than magnificence.

When the heart is enlarged by cheerfulness, that should open the hand to liberality.

Every transgression in the covenant will not throw us out of covenant.

The observance of the laws of Christ cannot be less necessary than that of the laws of Moses.

Those that would offer acceptable sacrifices to God must separate themselves from the wicked and profane.

They that hate to be refined by the fire of divine grace will undoubtedly be ruined by the fire of divine wrath.

Mere mercy itself will not save without the interposal of a mediator.

We are not allowed to pick and choose our duties, but must aim at standing complete in all the will of God.

If the eye of our faith be unto God, the eye of his favor will be unto us.

It is good having fellowship with those that have fellowship with God, and going with those with whom God is.

Difficulties that lie in the way of salvation dwindle and vanish before a lively, active faith in the power and promise of God.

If we would share in divine joys, we must carefully follow the divine conduct.

Everything that grieves us should bring us to God.

Others' sufferings for our sakes should grieve us more than our own.

Let us be constant to our duty, and we cannot question the constancy of God's mercy.

The way to have the comfort in what God allows us is to forbear what he forbids us.

All methods of accommodation must be used before we go to war or law.

Nor must those seem vile in our sight to whom, for aught we know, God may yet give grace to make precious in his sight.

Let our tongues be employed about the word of God, let it be the subject of our familiar discourse, wherever we are, especially with our children, who must be taught the service of God as the one thing needful, much more needful than the rules of decency or the calling they must live by in this world.

That obedience pleases best which comes from a principle of delight in God's goodness.

Modesty is the hedge of chastity, and therefore ought to be very carefully preserved and kept up by both sexes.

The way to obtain peace with our friends, and success against our enemies, is to make God our friend and keep ourselves in his love.

While we make God's precepts our rule, his promise our stay, and his providences our guide, we need not dread the greatest difficulties we may meet with in the way of duty.

God is pleased with *willing* worship, but not with *will* worship.

God is a friend that will not fail us when other friends do.

We must make that most our own which we have an opportunity of honoring God with, and employing in his service.

We must never be overcome either by majesty or multitude to do a sinful thing, or go against conscience.

A charitable disposition expects only *opportunity*, not *importunity*, to do good, and will succor upon sight unsought unto.

We must never think well of that which God in his law frowns upon, though in his providence he seems to smile upon it.

The springs of mercy are always full, the streams of mercy are always flowing; there is mercy enough in God, enough for all, enough for each, enough forever.

Let us check all sinful desires in our own hearts against God and his glory, and then trust him to check all sinful desires in the hearts of others against us and our interests.

Gracious persons measure their comforts and conveniences in this world by the opportunity they give them of communion with God.

Our religious services are not acceptable to God if they have not a due influence upon ourselves.

To reduced *greatness, generosity* obliges us; to oppressed *goodness, piety* obliges us to be in a particular manner kind to the utmost of our power.

If a great man be a good man, his goodness will be much more his satisfaction than his greatness.

If we in sincerity offer our hearts to God, he will by his grace kindle holy fire in them.

When we grudge to part with anything for God and our religion—this should satisfy us —that God is able to give us much more than this. He is just, and he is good, and he is solvent.

If God were not more mindful of his promises than we are of his precepts, we were undone.

That man loves his house too well, that cannot find in his heart to quit it awhile in compliance with an ordinance or with a providence of God.

Good order in a family, a great family especially, in the things of God, and a regular discharge of the duties of religious worship, are highly expedient and to be much admired wherever found.

They that idolize their own conduct cannot bear contradiction.

Faithfulness is the greatest praise and will be the greatest comfort of those that are intrusted with public treasures or employed in Public business.

Men of honor and business must look upon an acquaintance with God's word to be their best business and honor.

God's providences often seem to contradict his promises: but when they do so, they really magnify the promise and make the performance of it so much the more illustrious.

The choice of persons whom the young take for their example is of serious consequence; an error in this choice is fatal.

It is easier to *build* Temples than to *be* Temples to God.

God's word looks at things Eternal, and so should our desires and hopes.

The ruin of the enemies of Christ's kingdom is as sure as the stability of his kingdom, and both as sure as the being and life of God, the founder of it.

When we are magnifying the causes of our fear, we ought to possess ourselves with clear and great and high thoughts of God and the invisible world!

I.

Our Heavenly Father's gracious word—
  Though foes assail and want is nigh—
Says that his people are to him
  Dear as the apple of his eye.

II.

So then we would in covenant
  Join ourselves in love, O God, to thee;
Take thine anointed Christ as ours,
  And thy dear people ever be.

III.

Then, be clouds or sunshine
  With us all our way along,
We may believe we shall be led,
  And join at length the heavenly throng.

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